

# THE CENTURY

This month, eleven more are placed on the list of "the 100 who shaped the art in America." As the final eleven are added in September there will be a ballot, and readers are asked to vote for "The Top Ten of the Century." The results will be published in December, the 100th issue of *MAGIC*.

Those who have appeared since the series began in January are listed here.

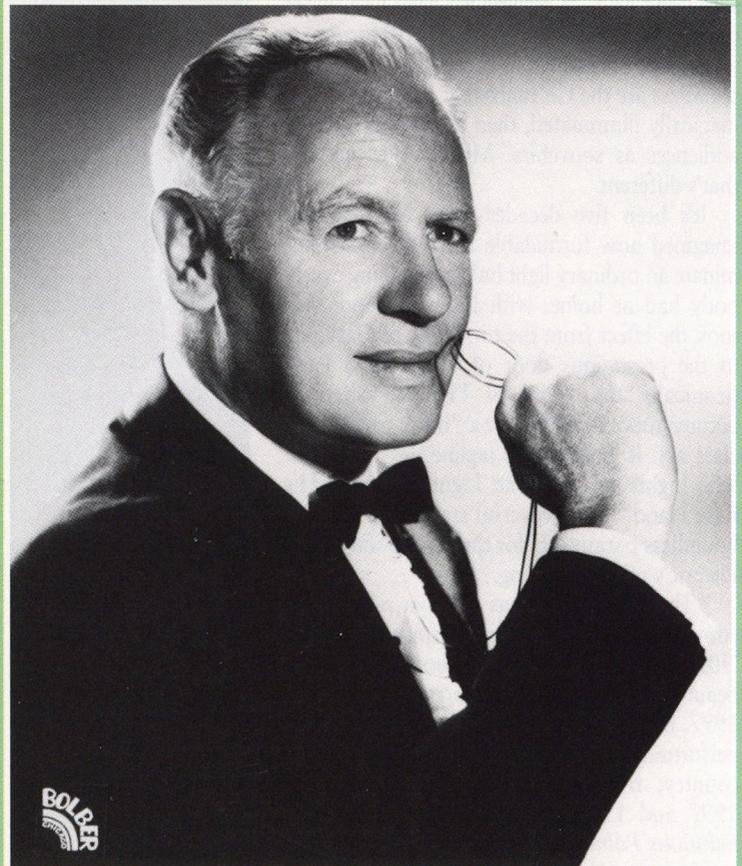
PERCY ABBOTT	ALEX ELMSLEY	DOUG HENNING	ROBERT LUND	SLYDINI
MICHAEL AMMAR	S.W. ERDNASE	JOHN NORTHERN HILLIARD	JEFF MCBRIDE	JIM STEINMEYER
THEODORE ANNEMANN	DARIEL FITZKEE	PROFESSOR HOFFMANN	BILLY McCOMB	HARLAN TARBELL
AL BAKER	AL FLOSSO	HARRY HOUDINI	MAX MALINI	FLOYD THAYER
HARRY BLACKSTONE SR.	NEIL FOSTER	JEAN HUGARD	ED MARLO	HOWARD THURSTON
HARRY BLACKSTONE JR.	KARRELL FOX	GUY JARRETT	FRANCES MARSHALL	EDDIE TULLOCK
DAVID BAMBERG	LEWIS GANSON	RICKY JAY	JAY MARSHALL	DON WAYNE
THEO BAMBERG	MARTIN GARDNER	LARRY JENNINGS	CHARLIE MILLER	DR. A.M. WILSON
ROY BENSON	JOHN GAUGHAN	FRED KAPS	GARY OUELLET	MARK WILSON
J.B. BOBO	URI GELLER	RICHARD KAUFMAN	PENN & TELLER	TOMMY WONDER
EUGENE BURGER	WALTER B. GIBSON	WILLIAM W. LARSEN SR.	CHANNING POLLOCK	
LANCE BURTON	A.C. GILBERT	BILL LARSEN JR.	JOHN RAMSAY	
BEN CHAVEZ	HORACE GOLDIN	MILT LARSEN	RICHARDI JR.	
DAVID COPPERFIELD	WILL GOLDSTON	RENÉ LAVAND	MARVYN ROY	
PAUL CURRY	U.F. GRANT	NATE LEIPZIG	JOHN SCARNE	
T. NELSON DOWNS	JACK GWYNNE	SERVAIS LE ROY	P.T. SELBIT	
JOSEPH DUNNINGER	ROBERT HARBIN	HARRY LORAYNE	SIEGFRIED & ROY	

## AlKoran (1914-1972)

Was he mindreader or magician? After an appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in the late '60s, Al Koran informed an inquisitive journalist that his entertaining brand of mentalism was simply "a branch of the craft," a form of "mastered amazement."

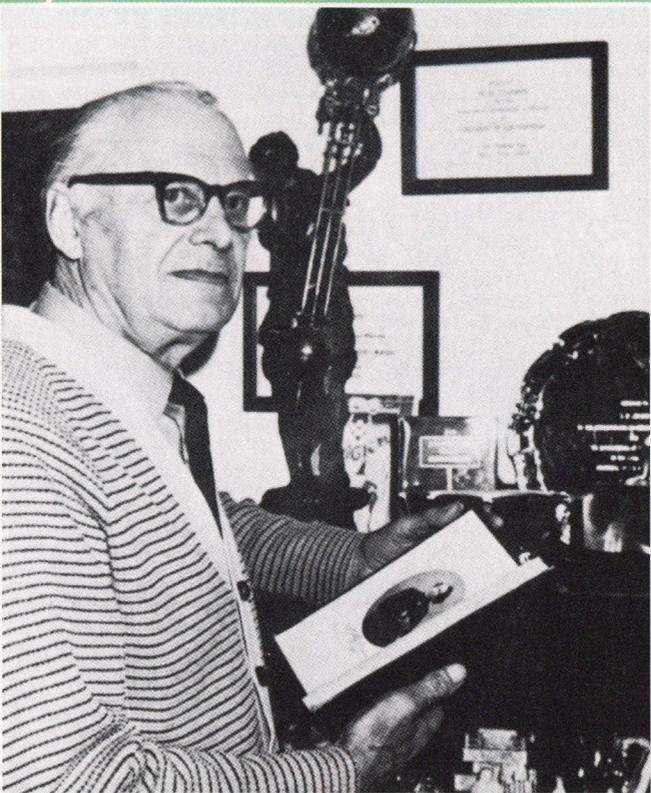
British magicians first knew of him as hair-dresser Eddie Doe, a proficient amateur who became the London Society of Magicians' youngest member ever awarded their gold medal. At age 29, he made the decision to turn professional entertainer. He adopted the "Koran" moniker; transformed his image to that of a serious, distinguished (whitened hair at the temples helped), highly educated, mystical gentleman who apparently possessed unusual psychological powers. As a mentalist, he capitalized on two decades of performance successes in variety theaters, night clubs, and television.

Always desiring to live in the United States, Koran immigrated to Chicago in January of 1969. He became a popular club-date act with American bookers and fulfilled numerous private engagements as well. He experienced an overwhelming acceptance by fellow magicians, and soon discovered that his mental machinations took back seat to his immaculate sleight-of-hand presentations. The "Himber Ring" routine, his "Card Stab," and original creations, such as the "Gold Medallion" and the best-selling "Ring Flight," would become classics... all, true forms of *Mastered Amazement*, which incidentally, was title of Al's earliest book for magicians.



# S.H. Sharpe

(1902-1992)



He never realized fame or fortune traveling the world as a conjuror, but his magical adventures of the mind went far beyond those of most magicians. Sam S. Sharpe was both a scholar and a writer, and his theories and teachings were poetic. Robert Lund called him “the Aristotle of Hocus Pocus.”

Sharpe was an analytical researcher, as proved by his early annotated translations of *Hofzinsler's Card Conjuring* and *Ponsin on Conjuring*. He was a dauntless historian, as evidenced by such works as *Devant's Delightful Delusions, Houdini versus Robert-Houdin*, and *Salutations to Robert-Houdin*. In the now classic *Neo Magic*, he expounded upon theory, while in his *Secret Science* volumes, which include *Magician's Optical Secrets*, *...Mechanical Secrets*, and *...Psychological Secrets*, Sharpe enlightened and explained how illusions may be presented according to theory.

His philosophies were inspired by a lifelong devotion to an ideal that magic, because of its inherent power to inspire wonder, must be elevated to a fine art. Whereas other thinkers of the century, such as Fitzkee, brought the average magician a better understanding of ways to make their magic more effective and perhaps more commercial, Sam Sharpe sought to reconcile magic with art and philosophy.

They took Houdini's “Metamorphosis,” a century-old trunk transposition trick that, back in the good old days, was accomplished in seven, sometimes five, and often on a good night, three-and-a-half seconds, and sheared the time down to milliseconds. The highest-speed electronic cameras are unable to capture the moment of the actual switch.

Jonathan and Charlotte Pendragon have excelled with their cutting-edge presentations of classic illusions. Whether it be the lightning-fast “Metamorphosis,” their sensual “Artist's Dream,” or the near-surrealistic “Million Dollar Mystery,” every presentation has been an expression of the power of the magician to astonish.

Having dedicated themselves to total physical fitness, they have created a performance style that has perhaps inspired others, but has been near impossible to copy. The Pendragons fusion of adrenaline-charged theatrics with grand illusion is truly unique.

## The Pendragons

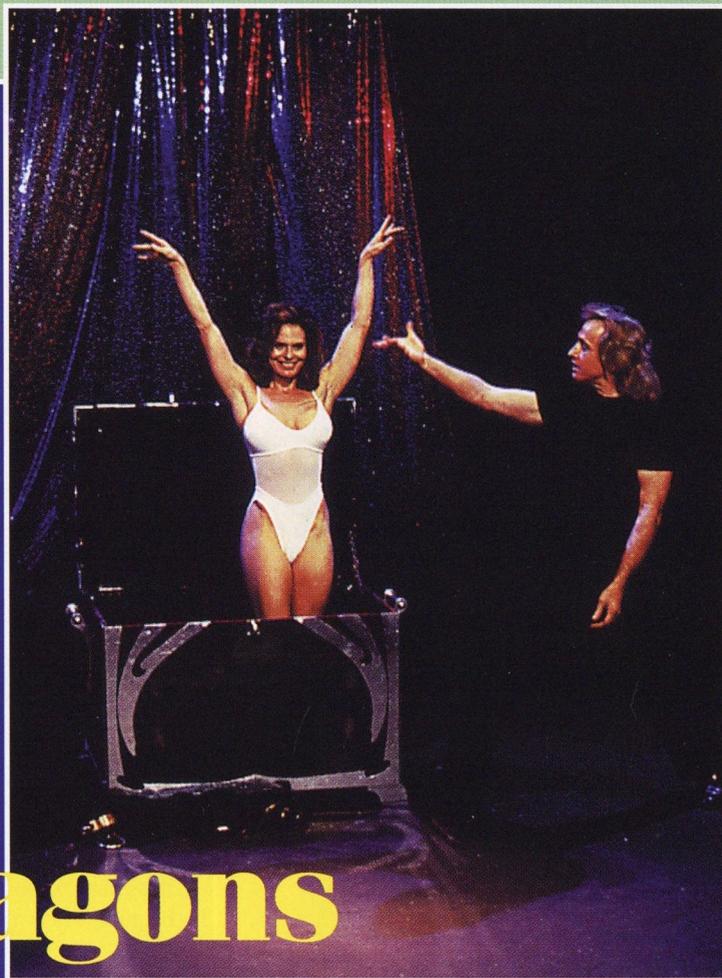


PHOTO: FRITZ DENT

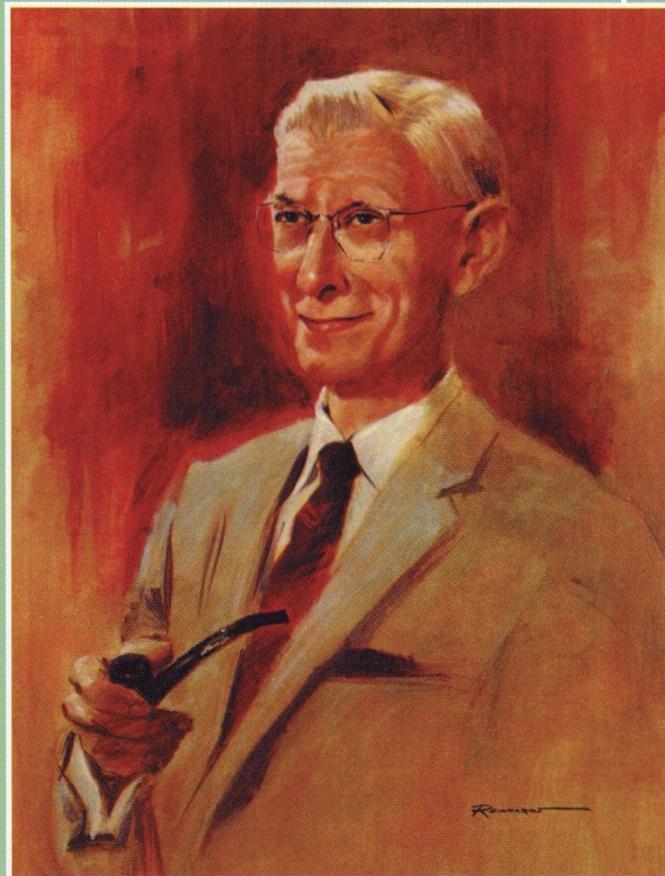
# Carl Owen (1889-1975)

A reputation began in 1913 when, as a fledgling cabinet maker, he went to work for Floyd G. Thayer. The century's first generation of professionals and hobbyists knew of Carl Owen as "the phantom genius in overalls, crafting the stuff of miracles."

A generation later, Carl, along with his brother Emmett, would be recognized as a proud owner of Owen Brothers Woodcraft, "Makers of 'Ownart' Specialties and Thayer Quality Magical Goods." In addition to Carl's numerous refinements of the classics, the list of Owen originals began to grow. By the 1950s, the company name changed to Owen Magic Supreme. Catalogs featured custom artwork and product photography, and production was at an all-time high.

A new generation would come to know of Carl's creativity when an Owen ad of the '60s announced: "Watch for a new national TV magic show to be aired soon. It will feature an Owen illusion on each program." And indeed, for two consecutive seasons, Mark Wilson's *Magic Land of Allakazam* brought oodles of Owen magic into the homes of viewers across the nation.

Carl Owen never retired. He continued on as the consummate artist and craftsman during the firm's ownership by illusionist John Daniel. When Les Smith bought the business in 1963, Carl remained a creative force in the company, until his dying day, with his last words being, "Les, keep the wheels turning..." And, as the century winds down, the magic of Carl Owen continues to reign supreme.



PAINTING COURTESY LESLIE C. SMITH



*The Fan Act, with Helen, circa 1951*

# Alan Wakeling

When asked to consult, he never fails to maintain the highest level of objectivity, always offering advice that is insightful, refreshing, and constructive. His approach to staging and directing is gentle and thoughtful, yet the results are dramatically powerful. Over the years, the work of Alan Wakeling has expressed an excellence that's derived from a profound understanding of the classics, as well as his years of experience as a performing artist.

In the '60s and '70s, as magic began to enjoy a high visibility on television, in theme parks, and on Las Vegas stages, Wakeling became one of the most respected magical thinkers in the industry. His ideas and innovative touches appeared in the acts and/or shows of John Daniel, Channing Pollock, Marvyn Roy, Norm Nielsen, and Peter Reveen. However, it was the two decades that Alan spent as creative director with Mark Wilson's production companies that established him as a major force in consulting. His "Modern Backstage," "Crushing," "The Aquarian," "Girl Through Glass," "Spiker," and "Excalibur" were but a half-dozen of the original illusions contributed during those halcyon heydays. Often, Wakeling's inventive abilities merged with his performing capabilities — as in his version of the "Selbit Sawing" — when he featured his own mysteries.

Alan retired in 1988, yet his ever-present note pads continue to fill with his latest inspirations. The accomplishments of Alan Wakeling, whether they be in the guise of the performer, the director, the consultant, or the creator have not only enhanced the art, but elevated it to its highest order.

# John Mulholland (1898-1970)

He was recognized as a “man of letters” — perhaps the century’s most knowledgeable writer and historian. His books include *Quicker Than the Eye*, *Behind the Magician’s Curtain*, *Pedagogue and Conjuror*, *The Early Magic Shows*, *The Art of Illusion*, *Magic in the Making*, *The Story of Magic*, and *John Mulholland’s Book of Magic*. For his fellow conjurers, he raised the already high journalistic standards of *The Sphinx*, the grandest of magic magazines.

As a self-described “society entertainer” of the 1920s, Mulholland took great pride in being the only magician whose name appeared in *Who’s Who in America*. It was in this era, while he taught at Columbia University, that a well-known professor of literature, Dr. Brander Matthews, suggested that a format of a show/lecture might inspire a dignified and intellectual interest in the art of magic. This inspired John to create a new calling for his sophisticated talents. As result, Mulholland’s *Wonders of the World* program, where he performed East Indian, Occidental, and Oriental mysteries, garbed in authentic costume and mask, toured five continents and over 40 countries.

His global travels enabled him to amass an amazing amount of playbills, printed matter, memorabilia, and ephemera from magicians around the world. Along the way, he sought, bought, and acquired some 4,500 books and publications that dealt with magic and its allied arts. Now in the possession of David Copperfield, Mulholland’s collective effort remains legacy to one man’s drive to preserve magic history.



# Mike Caveney

Most know of Caveney for his strong routines, as seen for example on NBC’s recent *The World’s Greatest Magic*. Many have emulated him, not so for much his distinctive style, but because of the profound sense of originality and structure that he imposes on performance magic.

Others associate Mike with creativity. He’s become a respected behind-the-scenes authority to many performers and major show producers. Often it’s through formal consultation services, but in most cases, it’s by virtue of his shared suggestions with those in magic who have become friends. Things just seem to get better anytime Mike is involved, and as a result, he enjoys being confidant to several of magic’s superstars.

And just about everybody holds high regard for him because of Mike Caveney’s Magic Words. For over 23 years, he’s been publishing — and in many cases writing — comprehensive volumes of magic history, as well as the definitive biographies of many of the greats of the art. In addition, he has published the works of many of the outstanding performers of this century. Mike’s books are true expressions of a devotion to the perpetuation of the richness of our art into the centuries ahead.



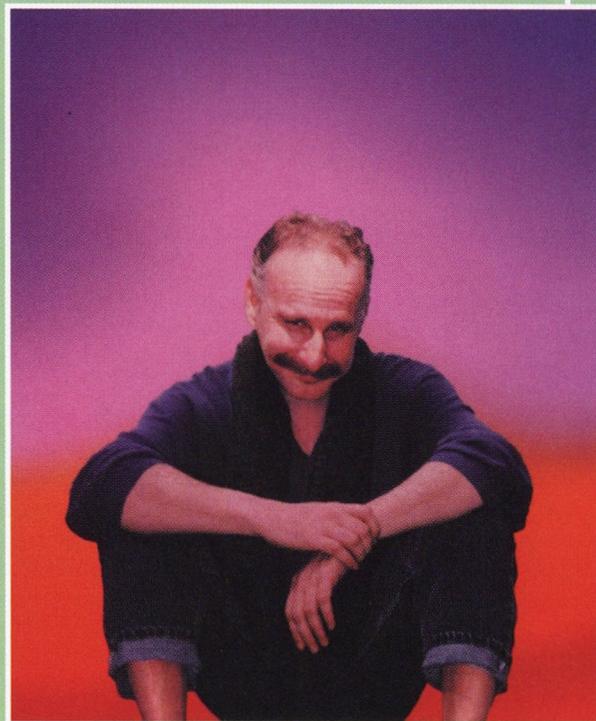
PHOTO: BILL TAYLOR

# Paul Harris

Playing cards became bizarre personalities with adventurous tales to tell and shenanigans to do. Coins were costumed creatures who either wore cloaks of invisibility or visibility, take your pick. You felt as though you were sitting on the edge of the Twilight Zone when you watched a close-up set by Paul Harris. He put fun into close-up magic.

Then he decided to put this fun stuff into books that were really fun to read. Paul's outrageously original material combines intellectually and emotionally involving plots with some diabolically subtle methods and very clever sleight of hand. Sure it's difficult stuff to learn, but the style of instruction is so entertaining that it makes the hard work amusement.

If the sign of an effective leader is to look around and see the size of the crowd that's following, then Paul Harris is the pied piper of the close-up avant-garde. The feats of astonishment that Paul creates and teaches are in the repertoires of a multitude of working pros, as well as in the bags of tricks of those amateur finger flingers who are into close-up magic because it's just plain... you guessed it, fun.



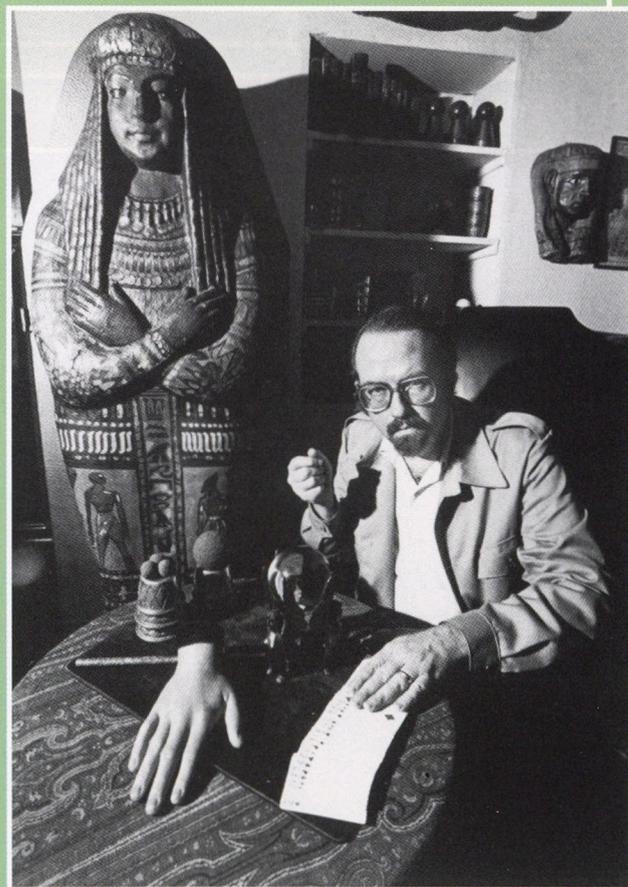
# Charles Reynolds

His perceptive eye for the art led to a career of consulting. Living in New York, where he worked as the picture editor of *Popular Photography*, Charles Reynolds received an assignment for a story on magic for *Time* magazine. Covering rehearsals of *The Magic Show*, he became fast friends with Doug Henning, and in 1975, when Doug was offered his first television special, Charles was offered a job as part of the creative staff.

His keen insight into magic history was instrumental in the assembly of an outstanding visualization of some of the greater magicians of the 20th century, published as *100 Years of Magic Posters*. The text portion of the book, written by the Charles and his wife Regina, is a veritable goldmine of magical biography.

As he continued to consult and create illusions for all eight of Henning's groundbreaking TV specials, Reynolds concurrently developed a strong friendship with Harry Blackstone Jr. As confidant to Harry, Charles collaborated on the grand 156-cities touring show, Blackstone's long-running Broadway show and, in 1983, he and Regina produced the two-hour PBS special *Magic!!! Starring Blackstone*.

As Charles Reynold's uncanny perception of the art grows, he continues to write, be involved in Broadway and other theatrical productions, consult for the movies and television, and as of late, lecture at magic conclaves worldwide.





# Russell Swann

(1905-1980)

In 1936, when America was struggling to pull out of the Great Depression, he was sailing into his 11th week of what would become a record-breaking 24-week run at New York City's famed Waldorf Astoria Hotel. It was an era when night-club magicians "Think-a-Drink" Hoffman, Cardini, Paul Rosini, Frakson, and even Dai Vernon, were amazing and mystifying, yet, Russell Swann was devastating those same sophisticated audiences with his totally surprising brand of comedy magic.

Some say it all started in the showroom of the Statler in Detroit, when a certain snake had allegedly disappeared from his basket. The debonair Mr. Swann called for his plumber's tools and the laughs ensued. A hotel towel was wrapped around his head as a turban. He traded the orchestra leader a pipe wrench for a flute. Then to the surprise of all, something started to rise from the basket. It was a stupid looking snake named Max with the selected card in his mouth — there were tears of laughter.

What seemed magical mayhem was studied comedy. Swann's long road of successes proved that to prevail as a comedy magician, it was absolutely necessary to have serious skills as an actor, a vast knowledge of magical methods, and a genuine understanding of what's wit.

# Dai Vernon

(1894-1992)

"Vernon — He Fooled Houdini" were the only words on an early advertising piece. "Artist" is how he fashioned himself on calling cards printed when he cut silhouettes. Later business cards proclaimed Dai Vernon as "The New York Card Expert." However, for the greatest part of his extraordinary magical life, he was simply known as "The Professor."

Of his obsession with magic, Vernon once said. "If you want to be an artist, you must devote your life to it, and if you want to be truly great, you have to give up everything else. You must dedicate your life to art." He devoted his every waking hour to understanding the principles of deception, in particular, the fine art of sleight of hand. He redefined its practice by teaching the psychology of motivation, attention to detail, and the absolute necessity of "naturalness."

Dai Vernon was a one-of-a-kind rare genius, who graciously shared his passion and wisdom with three generations of this century. And because The Professor possessed a quality of being larger than life or legend, The Vernon Touch will always be omnipresent.

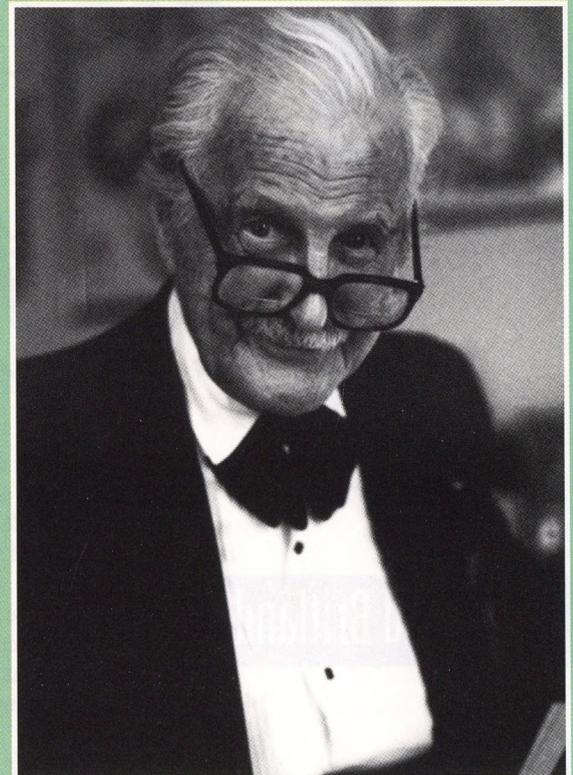


PHOTO: FRANK SIMON

Next month, "The Century" wraps...

A performer/collector responsible for television's earliest magic specials, a guy who made close-up and act, and the master who set the stage for the century.